

Sens. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) today signed a letter to President Obama urging him to release \$590 million in emergency home heating assistance. Rep. Peter Welch (D-Vt.) signed a separate House letter making the same request.

Sanders last year authored legislation cosponsored by Leahy that doubled funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program to \$5.1 billion, the highest funding level in the program's history. Welch sponsored companion legislation in the House.

The same amount was approved for this year, including \$590 million in emergency assistance that the senators' letter asked Obama to release.

In Vermont, the emergency assistance could provide millions of additional dollars to the \$25.6 million already allocated for the state, matching the funding level last winter when 26,313 households got help, 4,633 more than the year before.

"Even at the record appropriations levels passed by Congress the last two years, demand for the LIHEAP program continues to exceed funding," the senators, including Sanders and Leahy, wrote in the letter to Obama. "We urge you to release these resources as soon as possible to address the needs of families and seniors who are struggling in the current economic crisis."

After Congress doubled funding for home heating assistance in 2009, a record 8.3 million households nationwide received aid. This winter, as a result of the lingering recession, more than 10 million families are expected to need help keeping the heat turned on.

"Our delegation worked hard to double funding for home heating assistance," Sanders said. "We need to do more to make certain that people in Vermont and other cold-weather states won't go cold in the winter or be forced to make the unacceptable choice of staying warm, putting food on the table or paying for prescription drugs."

Leahy said, "The need for home heating relief in Vermont and other northern states continues to

outpace available funding. This emergency reserve was intended for times like this, and releasing funds to the states would help Vermonters through this difficult period.”

“Even in better economic times, LIHEAP is a critical lifeline for countless Vermonters,” Welch said. “Now, when so many are struggling to get by, this funding is even more essential. I’m hopeful President Obama will act swiftly to ensure that Vermonters who rely on LIHEAP will be able to heat their homes this winter.”

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program provides critical help to senior citizens on fixed incomes and low-income families with children.

To read the full letter, [click here](#) .